WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method for stimulating host defense mechanisms in a mammal which method comprises administering to the mammal a stimulating amount of an interferon via oromucosal contact, said amount being greater than about 20 x 10^6 IU of interferon for a 70 kg human.

2. A method for stimulating an immune response in a mammal which method comprises administering to the mammal an immunostimulating amount of an interferon via oromucosal contact, said amount being greater than about 20 x 10^6 IU of interferon for a 70 kg human.

3. A method of claim 1 in which the effective dose of interferon is administered in a single dose.

4. A method of claim 1 in which the effective dose of interferon is administered in a plurality of smaller doses over a period of time sufficient to elicit immunostimulation equivalent to that of a single dose.

5. A method of claim 1 in which an immunostimulating dose of interferon is administered continuously over a period of time sufficient to elicit immunostimulation equivalent to that of a single dose.

6. A method for treating a neoplastic condition which method comprises administering to the mammal an effective amount of an interferon via oromucosal contact, said amount being in excess of a dose of the same interferon which induces a pathological response when parenterally administered.

7. A method for treating a viral infection which method comprises administering to the mammal having such a viral infection an effective amount of an interferon via oromucosal contact, said amount being in excess of a dose of the same interferon which induces a pathological response when parenterally administered.

8. A method of claim 1 wherein the interferon comprises a Type I interferon.

9. A method of claim 8 wherein the interferon is selected from the group consisting of IFN-α, IFN-β, IFN-ω, consensus IFN, and mixtures thereof.

10. A method of claim 9 wherein the IFN-α comprises recombinant IFN-α.

11. A method of claim 1 wherein the interferon comprises a Type II interferon.

12. A method of claim 11 wherein the Type II interferon comprises γ-IFN.

13. A method of claim 6 wherein the neoplastic condition is of non-viral etiology.

14. A method of claim 1 in which the dose of interferon is from about 20 x 10^6 IU to about 1000 x 10^6 IU of interferon.

15. A method of claim 1 in which the dose of interferon is from about 20 x 10^6 IU to about 500 x 10^6 IU of interferon.

16. A method of claim 1 in which the dose of interferon is from about 50 x 10^6 IU to about 500 x 10^6 IU of interferon.

17. Interferon composition for oromucosal contact to stimulate host defense mechanisms or an immune response in a mammal which composition comprises a stimulating amount of the interferon, said amount exceeding that which would elicit a pathological response when parenterally administered.

18. A pharmaceutical composition in unit dosage form adapted for oromucosal administration comprising from about 20 x 10^6 IU to about 1000 x 10^6 IU of interferon and a pharmaceutically acceptable carrier.

19. A composition of claim 18 comprising from about 20 x 10^6 IU to about 500 x 10^6 IU of interferon.

20. A composition of claim 18 comprising from about 50 x 10^6 IU to about 500 x 10^6 IU of interferon.

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